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ABSTRACT

This practicum used parent partnerships to increase parent involvement, student attendance, and appropriate school behavior at an alternative middle school for 100 at-risk students located in an impoverished rural area. The goals of the project were to: (1) increase parent involvement in the day-to-day activities of the school; (2) provide parenting classes at the school; (3) decrease discipline problems and office referrals of the students; and (4) increase student attendance. At enrollment, parents signed an agreement to volunteer their time and talents to the school. Documentation of parent visits through sign-in sheets showed that parent involvement increased from 285 visits to 472 during the practicum implementation period. Attendance records from parenting classes revealed an average of 59 percent of parents attended the sessions. The number of discipline referrals for a 6-month period decreased from 208 the previous year to 106, and suspensions decreased from 82 to 59. There was a 62 percent decrease in absences during the practicum implementation. Additional components of the practicum included a parent support group, a student support group, a peer leader training program, and a designated parent room in the school. Twenty-one appendices contain parent materials, evaluation forms, and supporting documents. (KS)

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Increasing Parent Involvement, Student Attendance and Appropriate School Behavior of At-Risk Middle School Students Through Parent Partnerships

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by

Billie R. Nweze

Cluster XLI

A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1993

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Billie R. Nweze under the direction of the advisor listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Education at Nova University.

APPROVED:

11-06-93

Date of Final Approval of Report

Georgianna Lowen, Ed.D., Adviser

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Abstract

Increasing Parent Involvement, Student Attendance and Appropriate School Behavior of At-Risk Middle School Students Through Parent Partnerships, Nweze, Billie R., 1993; Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Parent Participation/Parent Training/Peer Leaders/Home/School Collaboration/Community Involvement/Student Attendance/Positive Student Behavior/Middle School Teachers/Students/Parents

The practicum was designed to provide parent training sessions, parent support groups and peer leader training at the alternative school for one hundred at-risk middle school students. Parents were involved in the process throughout the school year beginning with the initial student enrollment phase.

The writer provided professional development activities for the faculty and staff, and utilized parents and community members to bridge the gap between the two worlds of home and school. Parents encouraged other parents to assume their educational responsibilities by establishing a partnership with the school through participation.

Results of the data analysis revealed that creating a partnership between school and home does increase student attendance and appropriate school behavior of the at-risk middle school student.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The community is located in the Southeastern section of the United States. It is a rural parish with a population of about 23,000. The area has the highest unemployment rate in the state, and the state has the highest unemployment rate in the nation. The oil industry, which was very prosperous at one time, is now at a standstill. Crawfish and sugarcane farming provide seasonal work; however, most families rely on federal assistance of one kind or another in their struggle of economic survival. The few locally owned businesses that were in the parish have had to shut down or relocate as a result of the economic depression. Families have also fled, resulting in the collapse of the real estate market. Foreclosures are increasing along with houses that have been on the "for sale" market for years with no prospects of being sold.

Work Setting

The writer is a product of this community. She attended the public schools from kindergarten through twelfth grade. After receiving a high school diploma, the writer attained a baccalaureate degree by commuting thirty-six miles each day on a bus that was provided free of charge by the parish to a nearby state university. This bus service to the university was discontinued because of economics. The writer has been serving as a principal for eight years in the local school system. Recently, the system has begun to focus on the high dropout rate of students and has established an alternative school as one of the possible solutions to combat the dropout problem. The writer was appointed to set up and serve as site administrator of a school for overage middle school at-risk students who have been retained two or more times. The school is entering its fourth year of operation.

The professional staff consists of the principal, an assistant principal, a guidance counselor, eight teachers, a parent coordinator and two paraprofessionals. The staff of the school has been selected by the principal for their demonstrated skill and experience with middle-school children, as well as their high expectations and belief in every child's inherent ability to learn and be successful. As an incentive for increased academic effort, students are offered the possibility of moving into high school a year behind their age peers rather than the two for which they have already been retained. In other words, if the decision

is made by the staff that the student has compensated for deficiencies in math and reading, and he/she is able to achieve minimum competencies for moving ahead at the end of the year; a student can enter high school at his performance level. Whereas few students may find it possible to successfully achieve eighteen months of academic progress in one, nine month school year; over a period of two or three years in a non-graded accelerated program, the opportunity will be in reach for a number of them to move even higher because of the flexibility in scheduling and the intensive individualized instruction.

The school serves 100 students who have been referred by the other four middle schools in the parish for enrollment consideration. Twenty-five students are selected from each of the four tributary middle schools. Before a student is selected for possible enrollment, he must meet established criteria of the alternative school. The criteria are as follows:

1. He is unable to meet promotional requirements as determined by the school building level committee in accordance with the current standards of the parish pupil progression plan and has been retained at least two years.
2. He is not in a self-contained special education setting.

3. He is recommended by the tributary school staff due to unsatisfactory academic progress, and the effort to provide assistance has been ineffective as indicated by the following:

    a. student's failing grades.
    b. student inability to complete assignments.
    c. student is older than other students at same grade level.
    d. previous interventions and assistance have not been successful.
    e. student will be sixteen by Sept. 1.
    f. student is at least twelve by Sept. 1.

The students enrolled in the alternative school have had an intensive review of their school records by the principal and staff of the school. The students and parents have been counseled regarding the intent of the program, and requirements for entering and remaining in the program. The ultimate objective of the alternative school is to design and utilize individualized learning plans for each of the 100 students. The plans are developed by the student, teachers, parents and if needed, by a health nurse and social worker during a conference that each student and parent must attend. A consent form for enrollment is signed by the parent, and a contract form is signed by both the parent and prospective student.

Writer's Role

The writer is the site administrator or principal of the school. She has a master's degree plus sixty hours graduate credit in education administration and supervision, and holds state certification in speech pathology, learning disabilities, program evaluation, instructional supervision, supervisor of special education, principal of special schools, child search coordinator, supervision of student teaching and school superintendent.

The writer was originally hired by the system as a speech pathologist and served ten years as such. A promotion to principal followed and this post was held by the writer for six years at the middle school level. The writer became puzzled at the increasing numbers of capable students becoming disillusioned, rejecting school, and eventually dropping out of school either mentally and/or physically. The system was loosing too many of its youngsters. Her primary goal is to decrease the drop-out rate of the school system as much as possible.

Working with the supervisor of middle schools, the writer's role involves curriculum design, professional staff development, encouragement of parent support and involvement, education and solicitation of community support while taking every opportunity for public relation activities. The most important role of all is that of instructional leader at the school.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

The problem is that the parents exhibit poor parenting skills, and education is not a priority in many homes. The students are taken out of school during the crawfish and sugarcane seasons to help in the factories or to stay home and babysit younger siblings while the mother works. The student is expected to help out during the crawfish and sugarcane harvest seasons. Once a student has been out of school for an extended period of time, he finds it difficult to catch up with his classes, therefore, he becomes frustrated and gives up by staying home or becoming a discipline problem. The student realizes that if he causes too many problems, he will eventually be sent home on suspension.

The school has been successful in utilizing the individualized learning plans for each of the students. The problems of getting the parents involved by making them aware of their educational responsibility and keeping the commitment to attend and even participate in school activities have been major. The parents agreed during the

initial enrollment conferences to attend and participate in school activities. Some eagerly placed their names on volunteer lists and all signed contracts pledging school participation.

The students have not had guidance counseling services available to them before entering the alternative school. There are no counselors at the other middle schools in the district. Counselors are provided only at the high school level. Because the school's basic funding is a federal grant, funding for a counselor was written into the budget. Therefore, the counselor is a vital component of the team.

Problem Documentation

In an effort aimed at innovation and educational maximization of human and economic resources, the school district began a system-wide restructuring in order to improve student achievement and decrease the student drop out rate. A comprehensive study was performed in 1989 by an outside educational consulting firm with personnel experienced in dealing with high risk populations. A report was issued in January 1990, and included in the report was a position paper presented by a group of teachers that recommended adding guidance counselors at the middle school level.

A survey was conducted by the writer using parents and students as the target population (see Appendix A). A total of 110 persons participated in the survey. The need for

counselors was documented, and the results utilized as data to secure funds for the salary of a guidance counselor at the alternative school. Eighty-nine percent of those surveyed strongly agreed that counselors were needed at the middle school level. The survey participants also indicated that a guidance counselor's services would positively impact parent/child and teacher/student relationships.

Parents involvement was another area that was deficient at the middle school level. Parent sign-in sheets at the alternative school revealed that there was an average of 5 to 10 parents out of a total of 100 families attending school functions and the number of parents volunteering on a day to day basis were even less. For five of the nine P.T.O. meetings, only two parents attended. During the required enrollment conference, parents signed a contract stipulating that they were expected to volunteer their time and talents throughout the school year. Parents gave unrealistic to very bizarre excuses for their lack of school participation and the shrugging of their educational responsibilities. Parenting skills were lacking. Those families that are medicaid eligible were taking the easy way out by admitting their teenagers into the adolescent psychiatric unit at the local hospital. These admissions were for minor infractions such as staying out too late at night and watching television all night, therefore, sleeping during the day. The hospital is a money making institution and is profiting from medicaid patients. The hospital stay

of the child was an escape for the youngster and a rest from parenthood for the parent. During the previous year, 40 of the 100 students spent from one week to four months in the psychiatric unit of the local hospital.

During the first three months of school a total of 528 days of absence have been recorded at the school. Forty students have lost at least three days out of school due to suspensions.

A needs assessment was conducted by the school system in 1989 and the results, indicated in Table 1, revealed a need for immediate intervention.

Table 1

District Needs Assessment

1. A sum of 489 out of 1497 students failed two or more times in grades four through seven.
2. 62% of all suspensions were in grades four through seven.
3. A total of 879 suspensions in grades four through seven.
4. 23% of the state's population earn less than $10,000, that makes the state one of the poorest in the nation.
5. Of the 268 graduates in the 1992 class, only 6 were Black Males.
6. 38% of the citizens over the age of 25 have a high school diploma compared to 57% in the state and 70% in the nation. The population in the district has an average of 9.5 years of education.
7. 45% of the students in the district are dropping out of school.

Causative Analysis

An in-depth review of the overall situation revealed several causative factors. There were no guidance counseling services at the middle school level. Counselors at the high school perform other duties such as scheduling and record keeping. The counselors did not counsel students, therefore, they must be relieved of all non related, administrative duties. Another cause of poor parent involvement was the parents' need to become aware to their vital role in their child's education. The school did not train or educate the parents to become an effective integral part of the school. The school saw itself as a separate entity from the home, and the child vacillated between the two environs. The parents did not assume their role until they were taught how.

There is a high correlation between academic failure and discipline problems. The state mandates that if a child is suspended for the fourth time in one academic year, the principal has to recommend expulsion (see Appendix B). The students were frustrated and relinquished all hope of succeeding in the academic arena. Without support from the home, any form of school success was limited, and the child turned away and eventually rejected school.

The self-confidence and esteem of the students experiencing repeated academic failure were very low, and there were no peer support systems within the school.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

The review of the literature on parent involvement revealed a vast amount of research done in this area. However, when one focuses on parent involvement and the middle school at-risk child the information is limited. But the common strand in this sparse information is that getting and keeping parents involved takes a great deal of creativity, patience, time and commitment on the part of the school. And when parents become involved in their children's education, the children's academic achievement rises and their behavior, motivation and attendance improve. So the need for parents to become involved in the educational process is essential.

Beach and Halverson (1981) evaluated programs for at-risk children in New York and found that programs seldom involved the students and their parents in the program planning and decision making process. Programs were planned, organized and implemented but ignored the needed and vital input of an important group - the parents. Piele (1991) stated that most programs aren't reaching the parents who need most of all to be involved. The parents of those children who were most likely to fail or dropout of school were not targeted.

According to Lightfoot (1978) and Comer (1987), the involvement of parents of at-risk children is most important because the home and school worlds are so different. Parent

participation of at-risk students serves to bridge the two worlds of the children - home and school.

Other literature lends evidence to the problem created when parents do not become involved in school activities. Davies (1988) expresses that most of the parents of at-risk students have little or no contact with their children's school, and this lack of involvement creates a gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged, and therefore, adds to the national crisis of social, economic and political separation.

Coleman (1987) states that the educational needs of children cannot be separated from their social needs, and the home establishes the foundation of a child's social functioning. Many low-income parents carry bad memories of school and are intimidated by teachers and administrators. Most say they simply do not like to visit their children's school (Epstien, 1986).

A poll sponsored by the federal government and conducted by Rothman (1990) found the proportion of parents who made personal contacts with the school varied according to income and education. He found that most parents of low socioeconomic status have little or no contact with the schools. And what contact they do have is negative, because they only hear from the school when their child is in trouble.

Ascher (1987), states that the traditional methods of parental involvement do not work with at-risk parents.

However, schools continue to use these ineffective traditional methods. Open houses, parent/teacher associations, parent/teacher conferences have been methods of involving middle socioeconomic parents and have been successful with the middle socioeconomic class parents. Ascher (1987) also adds that this is not to say that the above examples won't work with at risk parents, but they do have to be approached in a manner that is compatible with the socioeconomic class of each parent group. Schools have to keep in mind that parents who are economically oppressed are so hardened by their own lives that they are usually hardest to reach.

Research indicates that there are several causes for the problem of poor parent participation. Sarkees (1989) and Davies (1988) believe that many parents of at-risk children have a low self concept of themselves and feel insecure about the ability to actively participate in their children's education.

Nicolau and Ramos (1990), and Amundson (1988) add that parents fear appearing ignorant or intimidated by their own lack of success in school. Schools also have a responsibility to encourage parent participation by incorporating their parent involvement programs into the mainstream of education rather than as a supplement to their education programs. Teachers must rid themselves of the concern that parents will try to take over their teaching

responsibilities and will not follow school rules and regulation (Becher 1984).

Lindle (1989) states that schools must consider the working parent and provide flexiblity in scheduling school activities to accommodate this population. She also imparts that parents dislike the "professional-client" scenario created at most schools. Parents prefer a less formal relationship with their child's teachers.

Brandt (1989) compares the professional educator to other professionals. He states that doctors require the cooperation of their patients during the healing process; lawyers insist on the active participation of their clients during procedures of litigation; therefore, educators must encourage active participation during the educational process.

The research indicated the need for schools to encourage parent participation in school activities. Many parents are not aware of their school participation obligation. The school's task is to inform, teach and direct parents when encouraging school involvement. The school must make parents aware of the vital role that must be assumed to increase their children's school success.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum was to utilize parent partnerships to increase parent involvement, student attendance and appropriate school behavior of the at-risk middle school student. There were four expectations projected and they were as follows: to increase parent involvement in the day to day activities of the school, to provide parenting classes at the school, to decrease discipline problems and office referrals of the students, and to increase student attendance.

Expected Outcomes

The writer addressed the following objectives while implementing this practicum that was designed to increase parent involvement, student attendance, and appropriate school behavior of at-risk middle school students through parent partnerships. They were as follows:

1. During the eight months of practicum implementation parent involvement in the school was to increase by 50%.

2. Parenting classes were conducted at the school and 60% of the parents were to attend. A tally of the number of parents attending school activities and clock hours of the time spent at the school was gathered from the parents sign-in and out sheets.
3. There was a decrease in the discipline problems and in the office referrals of the students. The writer determined the impact of the parenting classes on the school behavior of the students.
4. Finally, there was an increase in student attendance during and after the parenting classes. Because the parents became aware of their educational responsibilities to their children and understood the importance of school participation, the students were encouraged and supported by their parents to attend school.

Measurement of Outcomes

There were several methods used in measuring the outcomes of the objectives.

1. The writer kept the sign-in and out sheets that parents signed upon entering and leaving the school. This procedure was followed for all activities and all visits, including parent conferences, volunteer time and special functions. The information was used for data collection to determine the number of clock hours parents spent in actual school

attendance. Parent involvement in the day to day activities of the school was expected to increase during the practicum period of implementation.

2. Parenting classes were initiated and were to be conducted bimonthly by a contracted family therapist to educate parents of their responsibility and their vital role in the educational process of their children. A count of the number of parents attending the parenting sessions was determined from the sign-in sheets gathered after each session. The parents were to complete an evaluation at the end of the last training class to measure the parents' prospective of the effectiveness of the parenting classes.

3 & 4. To measure objective three and four, the writer compared the number of discipline referrals submitted by the teachers during the implementation period to those numbers submitted during the same time frame of the previous school year. Student attendance records were gathered, utilizing computer generated information, and were compared to the attendance records of the school year before and during practicum implementation. The comparisons were done to determine what, if any, impact the parenting classes had on student behavior and attendance.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

The practicum was designed to increase parent involvement, student attendance, and appropriate school behavior of the at-risk middle school student through parent partnerships. The writer utilized the teachers, guidance counselor and parents as a team to improve student behavior and attendance rates. Through parenting classes, the parents developed an understanding and an awareness of their educational responsibility to their children.

The literature suggested a number of techniques as possible solutions that could be applied to increase parent involvement, student attendance, and appropriate school behavior of the at-risk student.

Ramirez (1988) suggested that the school must begin to distinguish individual needs and family compositions related to culture, language, poverty, mobility, and provide services and personnel to educate the child "at-risk". Kurtz (1988) stated that diversity is not a disease but should be valued as an asset when working within a society

filled with diversity. Educators have to become aware of varying cultures and appreciate and respect the differences.

Reeves (1988) reported that parents have both the ability and interest to expand their parenting strategies and techniques. Parents can be taught new skills and behaviors. Programs designed for involving parents must be built on a "no fault" base but must also stress that we are all responsible and interdependent on each other, is the belief of Levy (1990).

Olson (1990) adds that being a parent is a huge responsibility, particularly for the at-risk parents. They must learn the job of parenting if they are to effectively assist with their children's education. Therefore, parents must also become learners. One vital form of parent involvement includes attendance and participation at workshops that train and educate parents in the areas such as, child development, parenting skills, and in helping their children at home. The most effective parent education programs are those planned cooperatively by parents and school staff members. Olson (1990) also stated that one goal of a parent involvement program should be to provide education that meets the needs and concerns of the parents as well as the school.

Hester (1989) imparts, "that not every teacher is a parent, but every parent is a teacher" (p.24). If parents are involved in the education of their children, they give

their children the all-important message, along with a positive example, that education is important.

Davies (1988) suggested several examples of school initiative to increase at-risk family involvement.

1. Holding some meetings outside the school in settings that are less intimidating and more accessible to parents.
2. Using natural and informal settings to reach and talk with parents (such as churches, markets, social centers).
3. Utilizing adequately prepared and sensitive school representatives to go into homes to meet with families.
4. Preparing materials in other languages for parents whose English proficiency is weak.
5. Scheduling activities that are attuned to at-risk parents needs.

Sandford (1987) agreed when he stressed that schools need to:

1. Change their belief systems about at-risk families.
2. View an interested parent as a potential partner, not a problem.
3. Begin at the top; the principal must be a catalyst. Develop and promote strong programs of parent involvement that involve administration and colleagues as well as individual teachers.

4. Communicate with parents, letting them know specifically what it is they must do.
5. Admit that help is needed.
6. Ask parents to become involved and take responsibility for their child's education.

Schools need to draw on the social resources of the community to be an effective entity of that community is what Coleman (1987) suggests. And finally, Epstien (1986) reports in her work with schools and parents, that attitudes of students, parents and teachers are changed when everyone works together for a common cause.

Description of Selected Solution

The literature was saturated with solution strategies designed to have a positive impact on the at-risk student. Parent participation in the educational process, especially for at-risk students, seems to be a growing concern across the nation, however, most of the information focused on the pre-school/primary school level. Parents who are involved tend to be more involved at those levels and somehow withdraw from school participation once their child becomes a middle school student. The writer believes that schools have to find ways to keep parents involved throughout the educational continuum.

The solutions that were selected were found to be within the writer's power base and were conducive to and

appropriate for the school setting. To begin the process, the teachers were inserviced by a program director from a neighboring parish who has had a successful parent involvement program that has received statewide recognition. A university professor conducted an all day inservice for the faculty and the parent coordinator utilizing the components of successful parent involvement programs and assisted the school in developing a general guide for its parent involvement program (see Appendix C). P.T.O. Officers, and Planning Committee Members were invited to attend and all responded positively.

A local practicing family therapist was contracted and provided parenting classes designed to educate parents of their role in the education process and to build within each parent a feeling of significance to their child and to the school. Parents and teachers discussed problems that each was experiencing and shared methods of solving the problems by defining roles for each group.

Discipline referrals were monitored, counted, and a total count maintained (see Appendix D). The referrals were compared to the referrals of the previous year to see if the parenting classes and parent involvement had helped to decrease the number of referrals and suspensions. The parents completed an evaluation at the end of the last parenting session to get feedback on the parents' view of parenting sessions. Parents were also asked to provide suggestions to improve future sessions (see Appendix E).

The daily attendance record of the students was monitored and retrieved from the computer and compared to those of the previous year to see if the parent involvement program affected the student attendance rate at the school.

The guidance counselor initiated a parent support group which met weekly at the school site. She also began a student support group that met weekly, and from this group peer leaders emerged. Each month the teachers, students, guidance counselor and parent coordinator recognized all parents who assisted the school for whatever reason and in whatever way.

Report of Action Taken

The following is a summary of the practicum that was designed to increase parent involvement, student attendance, and appropriate school behavior of at-risk middle school students through parent partnerships.

The guidance counselor was sent to a neighboring district to observe the conflict resolution program that is in place at one school and has received statewide recognition for its effectiveness. She also attended a state conference that addressed her role as a school counselor for the at-risk child (see Appendix F). The writer held individual parent conferences to secure signatures of commitment of parent school participation (see Appendix G).

Parents orientation day was held and conducted to explain the need for strong parent support and involvement to enhance student success. The parents were mailed letters that stressed the importance of attending so that a basic plan of action could be drawn up utilizing parent input (see Appendix H). The parents were also asked to participate in the development of a needs assessment in which they discussed areas of concern from a parents viewpoint (Appendix I). A parent coordinator was selected by the parents from the group along with a committee of five assistants. The committee was made up of one representative from each of the five geographic areas served by the school.

The parents completed a survey indicating special talents, skills, hobbies, and job responsibilities within the group (see Appendix J). The survey also generated information regarding times and dates of availability. The feedback gained from the survey was used to develop a parent resource pool. Once the resource pool was developed, the school knew if and when parents were available and what talents they possessed.

During the second month of practicum implementation, a monthly calendar was sent out to all parents indicating who was scheduled and what days and times they were expected to report to volunteer at the school. The calendar also listed school events and activities for the entire month.

The parent coordinator, teachers and paraprofessionals conducted a parent day. The parents were trained in the use

of the copier, audio-visual equipment, and how to shelve and check-out library books.

The teachers were assigned classroom "Moms" and "Dads" who were to assist with tutoring and other class activities. The teachers were to keep a record of parent time spent in the classroom and other related activities. Each teacher was given a volunteer regulation sheet that was also shared with parents (Appendix K).

The third month began with the counselor setting up a peer leader training program using those students who were selected by the teachers because of demonstrated leadership ability. She began to include training in conflict resolution and peer mediation in her peer leadership training.

At the end of the third month, the principal met with the faculty and parent coordinator to check the progress of the various activities. The main task during the fourth month was to make physical contact with those parents and students who had been missing school or had not been participating in the volunteer program. The parent coordinator and the parent representative of the residential area made home visits to inform the parent and student of school events and assign job responsibilities for future events. Time, dates and transportation arrangements were made, and a follow-up letter was mailed to the parent as a reminder of commitments made.

Those parents who were very active were recognized on the parent bulletin board, newspaper and over the school's intercom system. Local business gift certificates were awarded to the students. The certificates were used to purchase items such as: hamburgers, pizzas, writing paper, small toys and other small items. Individuals and businesses donated from $25.00 to $250.00 to this project (Appendix L).

The parents were called upon to participate in the discipline process at the school. Students knew that they were to call their parents and discuss whatever discipline problem they might be having, and the parents were expected to be involved throughout the disciplinary process.

The guidance counselor began her weekly parent support groups on Fridays. And the student discipline board was established utilizing those students who had been trained as mediators. Each student offender knew he and his peer leaders would discuss whatever discipline problem the offender had, and he would be guided to find means of resolving the conflict within the realm of school rules and regulations. The guidance counselor served as a facilitator on the disciplinary board.

During the sixth month parents, teachers and the peer leaders completed an evaluation of the parent involvement program to this point. The seventh month, two-day retreat was held at a campsite, and everyone played a part in planning and carrying out activities to ensure its

success. Plans were made to improve the retreat the following year. The purpose of the retreat was to have parents and students spend a relaxed time together away from home and school. The participants engaged in activities in which many of them stated they had never done together before.

There was babysitting provided by some students under the supervision of parents who followed a rotating schedule. Those parents who were experts at cooking cooked, those who were expert fisherman supervised the fishing rodeo while some parents taught craftsmanship.

Parents who had worked diligently during the entire implementation period became leaders and carried on meetings with prospective parents of the coming school year.

The guidance counselor collected evaluative information concerning her peer leader group and parent support group. The parents expressed their feelings regarding the parenting training conducted by the family therapist (see Appendix D).

This plan of action was utilized because it was within the power base of the writer and could be developed and implemented during the time frame of this practicum. The final month of implementation involved collecting information regarding attendance and discipline. A parent who was very active throughout the process made a short presentation to express her views regarding parents assuming educational responsibility and the impact it has

had on her and her child. The group of veteran parents conducted a social to welcome new parents to the school.

Chapter V

Results, Discussion and Recommendation

Results

The practicum was designed to increase parent involvement, student attendance, and appropriate school behavior of at-risk middle school students through parent partnerships.

It was the goal of the writer to encourage parents to participate in the education of their children. By educating the parents to get involved and by showing them how to become involved, the writer felt that student attendance and appropriate behavior should increase.

The writer addressed the following objectives while attempting to increase parent involvement, student attendance and appropriate school behavior of at-risk middle school students through parent partnerships. During the eight months of implementation, parent involvement at the school increased from two hundred eighty-five visits to four hundred seventy-two. To meet this objective, the parents were required to attend an individual meeting with the principal and the enrollment committee. Letters were mailed

to the parents of each prospective enrollee indicating that enrollment was contingent upon the parent and child keeping the appointment (see Appendix M). During this meeting the program expectations were explained, and the parents and students were required to sign a parent consent form and a student contract (see Appendix G and N). Each component of the consent form and contract was explained thoroughly to the parent and child.

The parent coordinator instructed the parents to sign the "in" and "out" sheets every time they made a visit to the school regardless of the purpose of the visit (see Appendix O). During the practicum implementation period of eight months the parents made a total of four hundred seventy-two visits to the school. There was a total of two hundred eighty five visits during the same time frame of the previous year. The results of the comparison of the 1992 and 1993 sign in sheets revealed a seventy-two percent increase in parent visits to the school. The parents spent a total of two thousand seventeen clock hours at the school.

The parents were given a room of their own on campus and one parent remarked, "I like coming to school for the first time; we have our own place; that makes us feel good." They decorated their room and named it the "Cobra Den," since the mascot of the school is a cobra. The principal stocked the room with supplies such as, paper, markers, posters and the like. The creative work done by the parents

surprised the faculty, and it seemed to have surprised the parents as well. The parents developed a needs assessment that listed the needs that the parents felt were of concern, and items they wanted the school to address during the year (see Appendix I). The principal met with the parents and discussed volunteer regulations. The parents were informed that there were regulations that needed to be followed by all to ensure a smooth operation on a day to day basis (see Appendix K).

The family therapist conducted five parenting sessions. The writer had scheduled more but the number had to be decreased due to the therapist's schedule overload at her private practice. However, she addressed the following:

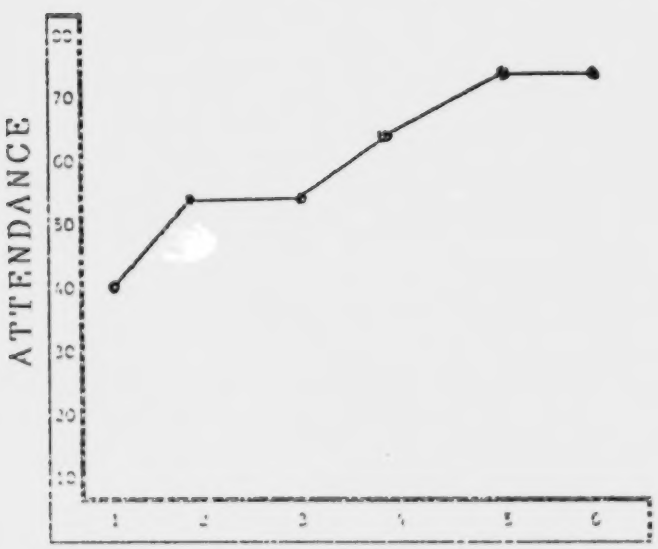
1. Parent/child communication.
2. Behavior management.
3. Family values and peer pressure.
4. Parent responsibility/expectations.
5. Child responsibility/expectations.
6. School responsibility/expectations.
7. Parent/School Collaboration.

The parents related very well with the therapist from the initial meeting. The therapist conducted her sessions very informally, and the parents responded eagerly. It was obvious to the writer that many of the parents looked forward to a time to get out of the house and share. They shared problems and began to offer each other solutions. The exchange was very rewarding. There were forty parents

at the first meeting, and each parent in attendance vowed to bring a new person to the next session. Fifty-five parents attended the second and third sessions. Sixty-five came to the fourth session, and seventy-one attended the fifth and final sessions (see Table 2). The results revealed that an average of fifty-nine percent of the parents attended the parenting session.

Table 2

PARENT ATTENDANCE
PARENTING SESSIONS



The third objective of the practicum was to show a decrease in the number of discipline referrals during the period of implementation. The writer compared the number of discipline referrals before and after the initiation of the parenting classes. By involving the parents in the discipline process, educating the parents regarding their educational responsibility and encouraging school participation, the writer felt that there would be a decrease in the number of discipline referrals for theses students. To measure this objective, incoming discipline referrals for the students during the implementation period were compared to those received at the same time frame of the previous year. The results indicated an overall decrease in the office referrals for the students. Forty-nine of the one hundred students had no office referrals during the eight months of practicum implementation. The offense that had the least number of referrals was in the area of weapon possession and drug use and possession (see Table 3). A comparison of the results revealed a forty-nine percent decrease in the number of discipline referrals received during the practicum implementation. These results indicated an increase in appropriate school behavior.

The final objective was to show an increase in student attendance. The writer retrieved the attendance record of the students covering the eight months of the practicum and compared it to the attendance record of the same time span of the year before. The comparisons indicated an increase

Table 3

A comparison of Discipline Referrals of the 100 students

January - June, 1992

and

January - June, 1993

Category	1992	1993	Difference
Discipline	30	15	30
Profanity	52	21	31
Fighting	37	22	15
Class Behavior	63	29	34
Leaving campus	8	7	1
Possession of weapon	0	0	0
Possession of drugs	5	2	3
Other	13	10	3
Total	208	106	102
No offense	45	49	5
Suspension	82	59	23
Expulsion	12	5	7

There was a 49 percent decrease in office referrals during implementation.

in student attendance, since only seventy-six days of absence occurred in 1993 compared to one hundred ninety-nine in 1992 of the same time frame. There was a sixty-two percent decrease in absences during practicum implementation (see Table 4).

Table 4

A Comparison of Student Attendance of the 100 Students

January - June, 1992

and

January - June, 1993

Months	Number of Absences		Difference
	1992	1993	
January	5	6	+1
February	40	36	4
March	41	20	21
April	40	10	30
May	45	2	43
June	28	2	26
TOTAL # OF DAYS	199	76	125

There was a 62 percent decrease in school absences.

* Implementation included only two days in January.

Discussion

The parents became united and motivated during the implementation. The writer believes that there was one major factor that lead to the success of this practicum. During the second month of implementation the district superintendent began to receive pressure from some high school teachers and board members to send older students, who were not succeeding at the high school, back to the alternative school. The ultimate reason for this demand was the fact that these students were not graduating and/or moving on and were therefore causing the high school's enrollment to increase. This increase was viewed negatively because the school would have to move from the Triple A Football Athletic Division to the Quad A, and the competition was much greater in the Quad A Division. The high school had not won a football game in three years. The board changed coaches three years in a row, and yet the football team continued to meet with defeat. So in a desperate effort to remedy the problem, the board contemplated decreasing the high school's enrollment. In other words, the alternative school was about to become a "dumping ground" or a solution to the football problem.

The writer rallied the parents at the alternative school, informed them of the impending move, and the parents began to unite and fight for their school. They approached board members, the superintendent, and went to the radio

station and informed the public about the true reasons for the impending move. The parents spoke at school board meetings and even threatened board members politically. This move yielded positive results since the district's school board members are elected by the public.

The parents had a cause to fight for, and they were successful in their effort. This adversity brought them together in a strong band. The feeling of "us against them" grew and flowed into the day to day activities of the school. However, there were some parents, about ten, who would not get involved. The parent committee members along with the parent coordinator made home visits, but these parents continued to be unresponsive. But this did not stop the efforts of those parents who were actively involved and motivated.

Recommendations

After the implementation of this practicum and analyzing the results, the writer is imparting several recommendations.

First, parent involvement in our schools is essential. Collaboration between the school, the parents and the community must be accomplished. Partnerships with at-risk families are impossible without collaboration. The school and the home must be brought together; they must connect, and the school has to be a connecting agent.

Second, many parents are unaware of their significance in the educational process. The school has to not only educate students but educate parents also, especially the at-risk parent. A partnership should be established between the home and the school. Once the roles of the parent and the school have been defined and each effectively assumes its role, student success has to emerge.

And finally, the school has to present itself to the community as a resource for that community. Too many school systems operate as a separate entity or a small community within the community. One parent at the school commented that she felt more self confidence in general and felt more appreciated by the school staff. Some parents requested more activities such as, educational training for the husbands. It was suggested that the school should make the retreat an annual event. There were indeed wonderful changes in these once reluctant parents.

Dissemination

The success of the practicum has been shared with the local school district as well as the State Department of Education. The writer spoke to community leaders, parents, and the school board members in a neighboring school district that is contemplating the possibility of starting a similar program in its district (see Appendix P). In addition, the writer presented a lecture to a graduate class

at the local university emphasizing the importance of parent partnerships in our schools (see Appendix Q).

Because of this practicum, the school was featured in the 1993 state wide directory entitled "Exemplary At-Risk/Alternative School and Community Programs" (see Appendix R). The writer made a ninety minute presentation at the state conference on At-Risk Youth (see Appendix S).

The school continues to receive a federal grant of $82,000 per year that has been renewed for the last three consecutive years. The grant is awarded through Funds for the Improvement and Reform of Schools and Teaching (F.I.R.S.T.). There are only eight recipients of this award in the country.

The writer also spoke at a community forum sponsored by the local hospital. The purpose of the presentation was to discuss the at-risk child and make suggestions regarding prevention and solutions. The school received many calls and visits from parents and community leaders following the presentation (see Appendix T).

The school has been featured by Associated Press in major newspapers throughout the state and many requests have been received for program replication (see Appendix U). It is the goal of the writer to continue to improve our parent involvement program and to bring the home and school together to form an even closer partnership - A partnership that places and keeps, "The Child First"!

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APPENDIX A

COUNSELING SURVEY

COUNSELORS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL LEVEL

Please mark one choice to complete the following statements: I am a student ____parent____ of a student in the school system.

Please respond to the following statements by circling the number under the phrase which best represents your opinion:

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4	3	2	1

1. Guidance Counselors are needed at the middle school level.
   4 3 2 1
2. Guidance Counselors are not needed at the middle school level.
   4 3 2 1
3. Middle school students need the services of an objective listener.
   4 3 2 1
4. A guidance counselor's services can positively impact parent-child relationships.
   4 3 2 1
5. Student-teacher relationships are improved through counseling.
   4 3 2 1
6. Counseling is a private issue and should not be provided in the public schools.
   4 3 2 1
7. Students should be allowed to seek the services of a guidance counselor without parent permission.
   4 3 2 1
8. Counselors should immediately report all conversations with students to the respective parent.
   4 3 2 1
9. All discussions between the guidance counselors and students should be strictly confidential.
   4 3 2 1
10. I have used the services of the school's guidance counselor and found it beneficial.
    4 3 2 1
11. I would use the services of a school guidance counselor if it were available
    4 3 2 1
12. I would not use the services of a school guidance counselor.
    4 3 2 1

APPENDIX B

SUSPENSION/EXPULSION FORM

PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
SUSPENSION/EXPULSION FORM

Type of Suspension/Expulsion
Check One: Bus____ School____

TO: MR. & MRS._____

ADDRESS:_____

_____

PHONE NO._____

_____
STUDENT NAME

BIRTHDATE_____

GRADE_____ RACE_____ SEX_____

DATE_____

_____
DATE OF HEARING WITH PARENT BY
PRINCIPAL AND/OR S.C.W.A.

Your child has been suspended from_____on the following dates_____. Your child may return to school on _____.

This is the first, second, third, fourth suspension and is for the following reasons: (Underline or circle the number of suspension above; list reasons below).

1._____

_____

2._____

_____

3._____

_____

4._____

_____

We regret that it has been necessary to take this disciplinary action. If you desire further information concerning this matter, you may contact me at Telephone No._____.

We are hopeful that our coordinated efforts will lead to better understanding and a solution to the problem.

LOUISIANA LAW PROVIDES THAT A STUDENT MAY BE RECOMMENDED FOR EXPULSION AT ANY TIME FOR ANY SERIOUS VIOLATION OF SCHOOL REGULATIONS AND SHALL BE RECOMMENDED FOR EXPULSION ON THE FOURTH SUSPENSION. SUCH SUSPENSIONS ALSO INCLUDE BUS SUSPENSIONS AND/OR SATS.

Other comments:_____

_____

Witnesses: (1)_____(2)_____(3)_____

Very truly yours,

_____
PRINCIPAL

DISTRIBUTION: (1) One copy for Supervisor of Child Welfare and Attendance
(2) One copy for Principal (3) One copy for Parent and
(4) One copy for Transportation Supervisor(if bus suspension or

APPENDIX C

PROFESSOR'S LETTER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

State University

February 16, 1993

Ms. Billie Nweze, Principal
[illegible]on Middle Magnet School
P.O. Box 236
Napoleonville, LA 70390

Dear Ms. Nweze:

I was really thrilled to work with you and your exceptional group at Assumption Middle Magnet School. You are fortunate to have the cooperation of so many dedicated individuals. I believe you are already on the right track with your Parental Involvement Program. Hopefully, the inservice information will add to that sound base.

If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Psychology
and Counselor Education

APPENDIX D

DISCIPLINE REFERRAL

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL
DISCIPLINARY REFERRAL

STUDENT'S NAME _____ TIME _____ DATE _____

NAME OF TEACHER _____ SUBJECT _____

ACTION TAKEN PRIOR TO REFERRAL: _____

_____

_____

REASON FOR REFERRAL:

___ Disrespect
___ Disobedience
___ Stealing
___ Threatening others
___ Molesting student(s)
___ Disturbing class
___ Assault and/or battery
___ Fighting
___ Using profanity
___ Improper dress
___ OTHER
_____

___ Vandalism/defacing property
___ Tardiness
___ Cutting class
___ Leaving campus
___ Cheating
___ Possession of/use of:
___ a weapon
___ drugs
___ tobacco
___ alcohol
___ fireworks
___ Distribution of any of the above

EXPLANATION OF REFERRAL: (This referral is not valid unless an explanation concerning the checked offense is given in complete detail.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX E

PARENTING EVALUATION FORM

Parenting Sessions Evaluation

1. The therapist presentations helped me to better relate to my child.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

2. I have used some of the techniques discussed in the sessions.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

3. I believe I am a better parent because of the parenting classes.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

4. I understand my role in the educational process.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

5. I understand the school's role in the education of my child.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

6. Suggestions and helpful ideas were provided.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

7. I encourage other parents to attend the parenting sessions.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

8. The parenting sessions should be required for all parents.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

9. The parenting sessions should be continued.

5 4 3 2 1 NA

Comments:

_____

_____

APPENDIX F

REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR COUNSELORS

AGENDA

DAY ONE Motivational Skills, Strategies, and Activities for Empowering High-Risk Youth (K-12)		DAY TWO Developing Systematic Programs and Approaches that Enhance Motivation (K-12)	
8:30 - 9:00	Registration and Continental Breakfast	8:30 - 9:00	Registration and Continental Breakfast
9:00 - 10:15	Exploring underlying motivational problems in high-risk students Increasing your "M. Q." (Motivational Quotient) The key factors in empowering high-risk students Unique strategies for building intrinsic motivation	9:00 - 10:15	Developing a comprehensive motivational program for high-risk students "Motivational Mentoring" Programs: • School-Staff Motivators • Community Motivators • Peer Motivators (K-12)
10:15 - 10:30	Break	10:15 - 10:30	Break
10:30 - 12:00	"Strength Coaching" (A systematic model for empowering students) "Procrastination Pulverizing"	10:30 - 12:00	Classroom-Based Motivational Approaches • Cooperative Group Motivation • Study Support Teams • Reciprocal Peer Teaching • "Hot Seat" Motivation • "Jump Starting" Curricula • "Academic Applauding"
12:00 - 1:15	Lunch (on your own)	12:00 - 1:15	Lunch (on your own)
1:15 - 2:00	Motivating Through Humor, Playfulness & Creativity • Empowering Props • Motivational Metaphors • "Motivational Dramatics" • "Psychological Martial Arts"	1:15 - 2:20	Classroom-Based Approaches (Continued) School and District-Wide Strategies • Unique Innecentive Ideas • "Bold Motivational Moves"
2:00 - 2:10	Break	2:20 - 2:30	Break
2:10 - 3:30	Unique motivational activities to use with staff and parents Exploring other useful strategies from national exemplary programs	2:30 - 3:30	"Motivating the Motivators" • Staff motivation programs • Parent motivation programs Exploring other useful strategies from national exemplary programs
3:30 - 4:30	Networking favorite motivational ideas with other participants	3:30 - 4:30	Networking favorite motivational ideas with other participants

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APPENDIX G

PARENT CONSENT

Address: _____ Phone number: _____

_____ SS# _____

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL
PARENT'S CONSENT LETTER

I _____, parent/guardian of _____, agree to his/her enrollment in The Middle Magnet School for the 1993-94 school year.

I agree that _____ must remain in the program for at least one year unless the site administrator request his/her removal from the program. I pledge to actively support the school and my child by:

1. attending parent conferences
2. volunteering time and talents
3. seeing that my child completes all homework assignments
4. insisting that he attends school regularly and on time (If he/she is absent more than three times during a nine weeks period, I must accompany his/her to school.)
5. signing all work and academic reports transmitted by school officials.
6. seeing that my child follows all school rules and regulations specified in the Parent Discipline Policy.

I agree to adhere to all of the above conditions which have been established to enhance the success of my child at the Middle Magnet School.

_____ _____
Parent's Signature Date

_____ _____
Principal's Signature Date

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APPENDIX H

PARENT ORIENTATION

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL

P.O. Box
LA 70300

Ms. Billie Nweze, Principal

January 29, 1992

Dear Parents:

Middle Magnet School is holding a parent orientation meeting on Tuesday, February 2nd at 9:30AM in the auditorium.

This meeting is required and every MMS parent is expected to attend. Remember we have to work together if we want to be successful. The meeting is for parents only. We will discuss our plans for the school year and any concerns that you might have about the operations of the school.

See you then!

Sincerely,

Billie B. Nweze
Principal

BBN:bbb

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APPENDIX I

PARENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Parent Needs Assessment

1. Provide tutoring after school for the students.
2. Teachers should send a homework assignment sheet home on Mondays listing skills to be taught during the week.
3. Call to inform parents when child is absent from school, especially if parents have not informed school of child's absence.
4. Allow parents to sit in on some classes periodically.
5. Inform parents immediately if child is causing problems.
6. At least three parents should be at school every day to assist faculty and staff.
7. School should provide something for the parents to do and not expect parents to just sit and not get involved in doing something.
8. Don't make parents feel bad if our words aren't right.
9. Let parents know the planning periods of each teacher.
10. Parents need to visit the school regularly.

APPENDIX J

PARENT RESOURCE SURVEY AND LETTER

PARENT AND FAMILY INTEREST SURVEY

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ STUDENT'S NAME _____

_____ HOMEROOM _____

We are asking for your help in order to enrich and enlarge your child's program at school and help your child have greater success at school. Please answer the questions below.

1. Do you have a hobby, career information, or craft to share with students? _____ Please specify.

2. Do you have an occupation or an association with a local business or industry that children might find interesting? _____ If yes, please specify.

3. Would you be interested in helping with any of the following? If so, please check.

_____ Advisory Council	_____ chaperoning	_____ helping with homework
_____ telephoning	_____ typing	_____ bulletin boards
_____ reading with children	_____ library	_____ counseling
_____ grading papers	_____ tutoring: school	_____ writing a newsletter

_____ other (specify)

4. Do you have some ideas of ways you'd like to become more involved in such a school program?

5. What time would you be able to be with us? Please check.

_____

PLEASE INDICATE THE DAY OR DAYS AND TIME THAT YOU CAN HELP.

_____ MONDAY	
_____ TUESDAY	_____ MORNING ONLY (AT SCHOOL)
_____ WEDNESDAY	_____ AFTERNOON ONLY (AT SCHOOL)
_____ THURSDAY	_____ ANY TIME (AT SCHOOL)
_____ FRIDAY	_____ OTHER
_____ ANY DAY	

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL

Ms. Billie Nweze, Principal

Dear Parents,

Our children are our most important resource, and we each have a personal responsibility to see that they are well educated.

As parents, grandparents, neighbors and members of the community you have ideas, talents and time you can share with our school and our children. We need you as a volunteer. If you can't work in the classroom or school during the daytime hours, perhaps you could help in other ways and at other times. The attached sheet should give you some thoughts on how you may be able to help.

I hope you will meet with us and become one of our school volunteers. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

[illegible]
Parent Involvement Coordinator

APPENDIX K

REGULATIONS FOR PARENT VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER PROCEDURES

1. Be sure to sign in and out.
2. Be sure to wear your name tag.
3. Be reliable. Call if you cannot be at school.
4. Be confidential. Do NOT gossip.
5. Be prompt.
6. Be sure to communicate with your teacher.
7. Remember that you are a role model to students.
8. Remember that you are considered a professional non-paid staff member. Act accordingly.
9. Remember that you are here to support teachers, not replace them.
10. Remember to record what you did each day.
11. Remember to check with the teacher before conducting any new activities with students.
12. Remember . . . if you don't know . . . ask!
13. Remember . . . without your help . . . we would be lost!

APPENDIX L

LETTER TO LOCAL BUSINESSES

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL

67

Ms. Bille Nweze, Principal

February 1, 1993

Dear Businessman,

Assumption Middle Magnet School is a vital part of our parish. It is based on the premise that all children can succeed. The school has one hundred students from across the parish and we are all working hard to serve students' various areas of need.

Because we are in our infancy, we are asking for donations to get on our feet. The parent presenting this letter to you has been given permission to contact businesses in his/her area for materials, equipment and supplies. We need the following items:

1. bulletin board paper, border
2. plants; artificial, real
3. flag pole
4. old magazines
5. playground equipment
6. prizes for fundraiser rewards
7. crafts for art classes, paint, easel, construction paper, colored string yarn, pipe cleaners and any other item that we can use to improve and beautify our school and enhance our educational program.

We appreciate all efforts.

Sincerely yours,

Billie R. Nweze

Billie R. Nweze
Principal

BRN:btc

Approved by

75

Telephone: 369-2648

APPENDIX M

PARENT ENROLLMENT APPOINTMENT

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL

P.O. BOX
LA. 70390

Ms. Billie Nweze, Principal

Parent(s) of _____

Since you did not keep your appointment, your individual learning plan conference has been rescheduled for _____ at Middle Magnet School on _____.

It is important that you and your child attend this conference so please made every effort to be here.

We hope to meet with every parent and child to include all ideas and suggestions for improving the academic performance of your child.

Don't forget to bring your child and please keep this appointment.

Sincerely,

Billie R. Nweze

Billie R. Nweze,
Principal

BRN:btc

APPENDIX N

STUDENT CONTRACT

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL

STUDENT CONTRACT

As a student enrolled in The Middle Magnet School I _____, am aware that I must adhere to the following:

1. I must attend school regularly (No more than three absences per nine weeks period - if more my parent(s) must accompany my return with a doctor's excuse, if appropriate.)
2. I must complete all homework and class assignments
3. I must respect myself, my classmates and all adults
4. I must follow the Discipline Policy of the Parish School Board
5. I must report to class on time
6. I must remain in the school for at least one year unless dismissed by the administrator

I agree to all of the above conditions which have been established to enhance my success at The Middle Magnet School.

_____ _____

Student's Signature Date

_____ _____

Principal's Signature Date

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

APPENDIX O

PARENT SIGN IN AND OUT SHEETS

MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL

1993-94 SESSION VOLUNTEERS' SIGN-IN-SHEET			
DATE	VOLUNTEERS' SIGNATURE	TIME IN	TIME OUT

APPENDIX P

LETTER FROM NEIGHBORING DISTRICT

PARISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Parish School Board

P.O. Drawer A , Louisiana 70084 • Phone:

ANN
President

CHARLES J.
Vice-President

GERALD J.
Superintendent

BOARD MEMBERS

District No. 1
LEROY
P.O. Box 33
., LA 70049
497-8832

District No. 2
CHARLES
424 Fourth Street
70068
652-9160

District No. 3
Rt. 2,
, LA 70068
or 7104

District No. 4
ANN
109 West 15th Street
LaPlace, LA 70068
652-9841

District No. 5
EMILY
Drive
e, LA 70068
652-7187

District No. 6
RICHARD
, LA 70068
652-3597

District No. 7
ALEITHA
n Street
, 70084
536-2923

District NO. 8
FRANCIS R.
P.O. B...
A 70084

District No. 9
FELIX ..
P.O. Box 85
051
535-2380

District No. 10
SHELDON
, A 70084
536-2177

District No. 11

June 1, 1993

Ms. Billie R. Nweze
Principal
iddle Magnet School
P. O.
70309

Dear Billie,

I want to thank you for taking the time to address the St. John Parish Alternative School Advisory Committee on May 26. Your presentation was exactly what I had in mind when I asked you to speak to the group .

I am very impressed with your program in Napoleonville and our approach is patterned after it.

You have already provided a great deal of information and ideas to me but your address to the group may be the key factor in getting our program off the ground.

Thanks again for all of your help, especially for taking the time to share your ideas and enthusiasm with us.

Sincerely,

, Supervisor
Child Welfare and Attendance

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

LOUISIANA ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCE AND INFORMATION CENTER 76

One East Fraternity Circle, ı *State University,* Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70803-0301

July 21, 1993

Ms. Billie Nweze, Principal
Middle Magnet School

Dear Ms. Nweze:

I read with interest and pride the article in our local paper about your work with at risk students in Napoleonville. Our Center can loan your science teachers supplementary materials for hands-on activities that may help make science more fun for the students. Enclosed are some materials you may want to pass on to your faculty. Please call us at 1-800-256-3742 if you or your faculty have any questions. Whenever you are in Baton Rouge, please stop by for a visit; we are on the edge of the campus nearest the Interstate.

Again, know we are so pleased that you and your school are getting the recognition you deserve for making such important strides in the lives of your students.

Sincerely,

Barbara

Enclosures

APPENDIX Q

LETTER FROM LOCAL UNIVERSITY

State University

August 17, 1993

Ms. Billie Nweze, Principal
Middle Magnet School

Dear Billie:

Please excuse my tardiness in acknowledging your assistance this past summer. Your excellent presentation to the class was well received, and I do appreciate you taking the time to visit. Hopefully your sharing of ideas, goals, and aspirations will encourage more young ladies to consider becoming school administrators.

Best wishes and many thanks!

Sincerely,

Graduate Studies in Education

HHC/jb

APPENDIX R

EXEMPLARY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL

EXEMPLARY AT RISK/ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS 1993

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ASSUMPTION MIDDLE MAGNET SCHOOL

Napoleonville, Assumption Parish

A self-contained alternative school, this program is housed in a separate building on the campus of Napoleonville Middle School. Serving 100 at-risk students in grades five through eight, Assumption Middle Magnet offers non-graded, accelerated instruction with pre-vocational enhancements. The school's objective is to return at-risk students to their age-peers in the educational mainstream.

Founded in 1990, Assumption Middle Magnet already has a waiting list. Students who apply for admission are 12 to 16 years old, have been retained at least twice and evidence the potential for success. Along with their parents, they sign a "contract" in which they agree to make a sincere effort toward academics, homework and attendance. Upon entry, Assumption Middle Magnet formulates an Individual Learning Plan based on standardized tests, information from the cumulative record, and interviews with parents and the student. New learning goals are set each semester by the student's teacher, the student and parents.

With its waiver in state time-course requirements, Assumption Middle Magnet tailors instruction to the needs of students. Students who have repeatedly failed in math, for example, are placed in extra math enhancement activities so as to accelerate their competency. The incentive for students is the possibility of moving into or through high school with their peers or only a year behind, rather than the two for which they have been retained.

Parental support is vital to this innovative program. A Parent Coordinator supplies families with literature, and a school guidance counselor works with parents and students throughout the school year. A visiting adolescent psychologist teaches parenting skills on an as-needed basis.

Over the past two years, Assumption Middle Magnet has been 90 percent successful in keeping students in school. After advancing to high school, trade school or a GED program, 60 percent of these students continue their educations.

Contact Person: Billie Nweze
(504) 369-2648

APPENDIX S

CONFERENCE INVITATION

STATE OF
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P. O. B(
BATON ROUGE, LOUI... ...0304-9064

February 24, 1993

MEMORANDUM

TO: Presenters of Exemplary At-Risk Programs

FROM:
Section Administrators
Bureau of Student Services

SUBJECT: Presentation at Conference
March 2-3, 1993
Bellemont Convention Center
7320 Airline Highway
Baton Rouge, LA

Congratulations! I wish to commend you and your staff for your outstanding work with at-risk youth in your school/school system.

The Third Annual Conference on At-Risk Youth will showcase the 25 exemplary at-risks programs recently identified through a competitive process. Each program is expected to provide a 75-minute workshop that will give participants practical information on the operation of the programs. In other words, the kind of information that would enable an individual to replicate a program. Draw on your imagination and creativity to present your program in the best possible light.

Six programs will be presented in four concurrent sessions grouped as follows: 3 under elementary education; 1-2 under middle school education; and 2 under secondary education. The seating capacity in the largest meeting room is 180; the smallest is 60. If you are planning to distribute handouts, you should bring no fewer than 100 copies. Each room will be equipped with an overhead projector, screen, and flip chart. Any additional audio-visual equipment must be provided by the presenter.

Please contact me at (504) 342-3671 should you have any questions. Look forward to seeing you March 2.

CBB:sgs

APPROVAL:

Dean O. F ..., Director
Bureau of Student Services

APPENDIX T

COMMUNITY FORUM POSTER

GENERAL HOSPITAL

Presents A Community Education Program

Featuring Ms. Billie Nweze

Nova University, Fort Lauderdale, Fl.

TOPIC: At Risk Students
What We Can Do To Help

PLACE: Napoleonville Middle School Cafeteria

DATE: Tuesday, March 30, 1993

TIME: 6:00 Until 7:00 P.M.

Refreshments Will Be Served
After The Presentation.

APPENDIX U

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

School wins fight against dropouts

By The Associated Press

NAPOLEONVILLE, La. — Principal Billie Nweze never quits. She also hates to see others do it. So four years ago, she came up with the idea of starting a special school for kids at risk of quitting school, and now, things couldn't be working better.

Assumption Middle Magnet School is a success story that's getting Nweze state and national attention.

"I'm looking at an 82 percent success rate right now," Nweze said of the students she has kept in school.

The school's small size lets teachers give personal attention to each of the 102 fifth- through eighth-graders, which helps to combat many of the students' low self-esteem.

Students stay in the school two to three years before being promoted to high school. There are no athletics, cheerleading squads, band, choir, clubs, school newspaper or yearbook.

Other parishes — such as East Baton Rouge, Terrebonne and Caddo — have at-risk high school or elementary programs, but Assumption Parish's middle school program was a pioneering effort, said Richard Thompson, of the state Department of Education.

So far, Nweze has sent 40 students to the ninth grade and five to the 10th grade at Assumption High School. Five of those students dropped out, two to attend trade schools, two because of pregnancies and one as a simple dropout, she said.

Not every student is admitted to the program. Nweze and principals from other schools look for students who are two to five years below grade level and who have experienced sudden drops in their grades — a clue that something is wrong.

"Sometime you've got kids who are already lost," Nweze said. "I've turned kids away (after) the parent conference. . . . It all boils down to a gut feeling."

Nweze began the school four years ago when she faced losing her position as principal of Napoleonville Middle School during an administrative reorganization.

She started the program with a three-year, $200,000 federal grant. Now, she and 10 teachers oversee the students ranging from 12 to 17 years old. They also take field trips. Last year, Nweze took the students to see a play in Thibodaux. In March, she plans to taken them to Huntsville, Ala.

Since these students get more attention than they would in a regular education system, some accelerate more than one grade level during a school year.

Nweze and her staff send weekly notes to parents, complimenting their children's progress.

School takes in students others can't facilitate

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Louisiana Lifestyle

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Nweze and her staff make sure to send weekly notes to parents, complimenting their children's progress.

Nweze said when she first began the magnet school, some parents and teachers thought it would be a dumping ground for below-average students with discipline problems. But the school is modeled on the premise that the kids are just as capable of learning as any other student.

"We're not trying to lower standards," Thompson said. "We balance our time between the academics ... and the human spirit and what drives them to either be successful or be a dropout."